DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 078 114 UD 013 647

TITLE	"Walk Together Children." A Report of the Iowa State Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on Housing and Education in Waterloo, Iowa.
INSTITUTION	Iowa State Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Des Moines.
PUB DATE	22 May 71
NOTE	20p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Civil Rights; *Educational Opportunities; Educational Problems; Equal Education; *Housing Discrimination; Housing Needs; Housing Opportunities; Minority Groups; Negro Education; Negro Housing; Racial Discrimination; Relevance (Education); *School Integration; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*Iowa

ABSTRACT

Equal education and open housing have become issues of an increasingly serious concern throughout the Nation. American communities are beset by the complexity of those interrelated problems that inexorably indicate inequality for minority citizens. In response to this, the Iowa State Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a closed meeting to investigate the problems of Waterloo, Iowa. It was felt that this investigation would clarify and perhaps present solutions not only for the serious situation in Waterloo, but for similar communities throughout the country. Waterloo is a medium-size conservative midwestern city with the second largest black population in Iowa. Its black population is strong, with a diversity of income, power, and ability. The advantage, however, remains with the established system which can, by the release or suppression of crucial information, frustrate the efforts of volunteer groups seeking to alleviate the status quo. Waterloo citizens reported that the city's supply of safe, sanitary housing is inadequate. This is especially true for the poor and minorities. The urban renewal figures, which indicate that more than 50 percent of Waterloo's black population lives in substandard housing, reflect this. Studies of the Waterloo schools indicate a reluctance on the part of the system to provide an adequate and equal education for the black students in the community. This failure to confront and correct an obvious problem inevitably adds to the city's racial strife. (Author/JM)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 078114

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"WALK TOGETHER CHILDREN"

A REPORT OF THE

IOWA STATE COMMITTEE

to

THE U. S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

on

HOUSING AND EDUCATION

in

WATERLOO, IOWA

Closed Meeting
May 22, 1971

UD 013647

IOWA STATE COMMITTEE

TO THE

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Rev. James M. Shopshire, Chairman**
Des Moines

Hon. David F. Halbach, Vice Chairman &
Clinton Acting Secretary*

Dr. Donald E. Boles
Ames

Royal Corbin*
Des Moines

Rev. Gene H. Hermeier**
Council Bluffs

Earl W. Klingaman*
Waterloo

Earnest M. Rodriquez
Davenport

John L. Schneiders
Urbandale

Paul J. Stelter
Des Moines

Rev. John I. Thomas*
Cedar Rapids.

George W. Turner*
Cedar Rapids

CR1.2:H81/15

*Participated in the Closed Meeting held May 22, 1971

**No longer members of the Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....i

Introduction..... 1

Housing.....2

Education.....6

Conclusion.....12

Recommendations.....14

PREFACE

The United States Commission on Civil Rights

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent agency of the executive branch of the Federal Government created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957. By the terms of that act, as amended by the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1964, the Commission is charged with the following duties: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting denials of the equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

The State Advisory Committees.

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to Section 105 (c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as amended. The Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve, without compensation, to advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission upon matters of mutual concern in the preparation of Commission reports to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon pertinent inquiries the State Committees conduct in public or private sessions; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission on matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference which the Commission may hold within the State.

This report was submitted to the United States Commission on Civil Rights by the Iowa State Committee. The conclusions and recommendations are based upon the State Committee's evaluation of information received at a closed informal hearing on May 22, 1971. This report has been received by the Commission and will be considered by it in making its reports and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

For further information, a transcript of the hearing may be obtained from the Office of Community Programming U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D. C. 20425, or the Commission's Central States Regional Office.

INTRODUCTION

Equal education and open housing have become issues of an increasingly serious concern throughout the Nation. American communities are beset by the complexity of those interrelated problems that inexorably indicate inequality for minority citizens.

In response to this, the Iowa State Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights held a closed meeting to investigate the problems of Waterloo, Iowa. It was felt that this investigation would clarify and perhaps present solutions not only for the serious situation in Waterloo, but for similar communities throughout the country.

Waterloo is a medium-size conservative midwestern city with the second largest black population in Iowa. Its black population is strong, with a diversity of income, power, and ability. The advantage, however, remains with the established system which can, by the release or suppression of crucial information, frustrate the efforts of volunteer groups seeking to alleviate the status quo.

Both social and economic segregation isolate the white community from blacks and other minority groups. In Waterloo more than 90 percent of the black population is contained in five of the city's 18 census tracts. The majority of the blacks live on the East Side of the city, separated by the Cedar River from the white community on the West Side. In Waterloo, there is also a close relationship between the problems of minority housing and school desegregation.

HOUSING

According to the Waterloo Human Relations Commission, approximately 800 housing units were demolished by urban renewal projects alone from 1960 to 1970. Most of the destroyed houses were inhabited by low-income persons. No new housing has been constructed for the poor in the last 10 years, according to information given to the Committee by a staff member of the Waterloo Catholic Charities Office.

Two assessments have recently been made of the number of substandard dwellings in the city. One, done by the Waterloo Urban Renewal Department, estimated 2,300 substandard units. The metropolitan planning commission sets the number at 1,561 units in a recently completed study.

Urban renewal statistics contained in the Workable Program Application of February 1971 offer a racial breakdown of substandard housing. Whites occupy 1,200 units, minorities 880, with few vacant units. Thus more than 50 percent of Waterloo's minority families live in substandard housing contrasted with 9 percent of white families.

There was no public housing in Waterloo at the time of this report. State law prohibits public housing except for the elderly unless passed by a local referendum and the citizens of Waterloo have failed to pass such a referendum. There was some use of Federal Housing Administration programs, which are principally intended for the moderate-income level /$6,000 annually for a family of four/.

The Section 235 Program /federally subsidized homeownership/ has resulted in 141 new homes, 121 of which have been purchased. As for

Section 236 /multifamily rental units/, Waterloo has Logandale, a 126 unit complex which has been nationally cited as a model of community cooperation. The nonprofit sponsor, United Housing, a coalition of nine religious and community organizations, sped through bureaucratic hurdles and built new units in record time. Other nonprofit groups, including the chamber of commerce, are developing proposals for similar projects.

The middle-income nature of FHA programs, however, which are not public housing (as the planning commission study erroneously states) places Logandale out of reach of low-income families. This has stimulated interest in a local public housing authority, which has recently applied for housing for the elderly.

The Iowa State Committee heard testimony from persons familiar with housing conditions in the city, including local government officials, and directors of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Low Rent Housing Commission. In addition, 11 other persons were interviewed prior to the May 22, 1971 meeting. These included representatives of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the League of Women Voters, local business, and community organizations.

Waterloo citizens reported that the city's supply of safe, sanitary housing is inadequate. This is especially true for the poor and minorities. The urban renewal figures, which indicate that more than 50 percent of Waterloo's black population lives in substandard housing, reflect this.

Regardless of which number of units one accepts for the actual housing need in Waterloo, the problem cited most frequently by participants in the May 22 meeting relates to the system's incapability of delivering housing for Waterloo's poor. The following charges express the feelings and perceptions of Waterloo's poor and minority communities:

1. The FHA 235 and 236 programs cannot meet the needs of the city's low-income people, yet the city seems to believe that these programs are reaching the poor.
2. The urban renewal department and its director are the objects of distrust by the poor and the black. This appears to be partly due to the unfavorable image the urban renewal department created 10 years ago, and partially to the ongoing fight over resident participation in decisionmaking regarding urban renewal programs.
3. The uncertainties surrounding the newly formed city low rent housing commission--including such basic questions as the permanence of its existence, its capacity to operate as a decisionmaking body, its relationship to the city council, the attitude of the commissioners toward public housing for families, the impact of the State law requiring a referendum for family housing and the apparent dysfunctional relationship between the commission and the department of urban renewal--causes many citizens to doubt that the housing commission will ever be, or is intended to be, an effective agent for housing the poor.

The conditions troubling Waterloo residents must be faced by city administrators. It would be tragic if the citizens of Waterloo, who have displayed some effort toward change, were embittered and demoralized by an apparently insensitive bureaucracy.

This feeling of frustration overwhelms the lives of many young blacks, particularly students. Those who were interviewed stated: "We get a high school education and we get no jobs. The white high school graduate is guaranteed a job because he is white."

Although Federal funds have been used in Waterloo to alleviate some of the problems in housing and education, discrimination and segregation still exist. One major goal of American society is to provide decent housing in a suitable environment for all of its families. Neither the Federal Government nor Waterloo has met the housing needs for a great majority of low- and moderate-income families. The discriminatory practices of real estate brokers, builders, and mortgage lenders continue to confine blacks to ghetto areas and restrict the housing market. This restriction and ensuing segregation also present a major barrier to equal education in Waterloo.

Witnesses stated that closing the West Side of the Cedar River to black families effectively perpetuated Waterloo's discriminatory housing practices. One participant said: "When they're /real estate salemen/ approached from the outside, by outsiders to find housing, the first thing they take into consideration is their status and color."

Other participants told the Iowa State Committee of actions by Realtors which indicated the existence of a dual housing market in Waterloo. Whites were encouraged to buy housing on the West Side of the river; black families were only shown properties on the East Side.

Complaints of housing discrimination were brought to the Waterloo Commission on Human Rights. Minority representation felt that the commission lacked the power to handle complaints expeditiously and was too dependent upon the city attorney for legal assistance.

EDUCATION

Those individuals and institutional structures responsible for residential segregation are also formidable opponents of the process of desegregation. When minorities are contained in areas where housing is poor and substandard the children are doubly burdened in overcoming disadvantages placed upon them by social institutions.

An equal and adequate education for all children is a crucial goal of American public schools. It is dubious, however, that any constructive efforts can be made toward this goal when racially isolated school systems exist. In Waterloo, there has been no stated commitment or plan for desegregation of community schools.

Most small cities, such as Waterloo, have relatively small black and other minority populations. This small minority population in the city and the resultant small minority school enrollment directly influence the effectiveness of school desegregation techniques. One of the main deterrents to effective school desegregation is the logistical problem involved in transporting large numbers of children long distances. Waterloo, however, does not have this problem, and thus the rationale for continuing segregated school rings false.

Community Schools

A member of the Waterloo Board of Education stated that there is a struggle for equal education opportunity throughout the community. A member of the Waterloo NAACP Education Committee testified on desegregation problems in the city: "...And now I understand that State Board of Public Instruction, at the request of the school board, did prepare and I hope by now the board has received and will act upon a plan of desegregation for Waterloo schools. My fuzziness in this area is related, I'm sure, to the frustrations and anxieties I experienced trying to 'watchdog' this plan until it could actually at least get presented.

"I personally know of wide and intensive efforts on the part of 'responsible' people here in Waterloo to bring pressure to have this plan scuttled."

The desegregation plan for Waterloo schools, however, is a slow one. The superintendent of schools testified that the system has "an effective desegregation plan" which will not be fully implemented until 1978. School administrators plan to have a new school, Central High, built by 1972. This school will be integrated through an open enrollment policy which is being revised. The superintendent feels that integration in this school will be effective, even though the majority of the black students in Waterloo are concentrated in the North and East areas of the city, and Central High is in the West.

A member of the Waterloo Board of Education presented a somewhat different picture of the possibilities for equal education in Waterloo:

> The intent of the school administration and the school board is to proceed very gradually and with great caution. The Waterloo school district will probably do only a little more than it is forced to do to achieve desegregation of its schools. The school system has no plan for desegregating its schools, nor is it trying to develop one. At the present time this system buses something less than 300 children to white schools in what is called 'voluntary open enrollment': the children only go to schools where there is available space -- and only those who volunteer to participate.

Open enrollment in Waterloo, though, tends to be a one way exchange. With one exception, white students do not travel to black schools. School officials hope to make their one exception, the Bridgeway Project, a model for future integration plans.

The Bridgeway Project uses a reverse busing plan, bringing white students to a black school. It has an enrollment of 389 students, 50 percent of whom are white.

The executive director of the Waterloo Education Association feels that much of the desegregation problem is a lack of orientation. Asked how Waterloo schools could achieve desegregation he stated: "Traditionally, at least though this State and this Board of Education is the same as other boards throughout the State, they simply don't operate from the basis of goals or objectives. There is no real commitment to where they're headed. I think that, first of all, they have to commit themselves to the goal of desegregation and once they're committed to that goal, then they can begin defining a program for desegregation."

The Board of Education

The Waterloo Community School District has made policy statements concerning the education of minority and disadvantaged children. In 1967, the board of education stated:

> "...that equality of opportunity requires that educational programs and resources must be designated and utilized to help every child overcome any handicaps, cultural, economic, physical, emotional, or mental."

In conjunction with this, the board felt that public schools should help all children learn how to live and work together. The board also stated, however, that the maximum educational opportunity for each child is impeded in schools with a high proportion of minority or disadvantaged children.

While continuing to recognize the validity of the neighborhood school concept, the board has committed itself to the elimination of the heavy concentrations of poor and minority children from the schools. The board also recognizes that there are no simple solutions to this problem--that costs and logistics must be considered, and that plans must be formulated, considered, and implemented. The implementation of this commitment, however, can only be accomplished with the full cooperation of the entire community.

The board of education is well aware of the heavy concentrations of minority groups in some of the schools, and the growing racial imbalance in others. Furthermore, the board recognizes that, while neither caused by, or completely subject to, change by the public schools, this situation results in a variety of educational problems. The board also reaffirms its conviction that it has not at any time allowed practices which would artifically establish or maintain segregation or discrimination, whether ethnic, religious, or racial.

It is desirable, the board feels, for the schools to establish increased opportunities for intergroup experiences among local cultural and ethnic groups. This does not imply the abandonment of the neighborhood school principle, but rather the incorporation of changes or adaptations which should result in a richer intercultural school experience for both pupils and school employees.

The board believes that the commitment to provide equal and appropriate opportunity for every child is more than an educational commitment--it is a public one.

The first black teacher in Waterloo was hired in 1952. For several years after that, less than 5 percent of the teachers in the system were black. In the 1970-71 school year, there were 28 black teachers out of a total of 800, a slight improvement over the 1969-70 total of 20.

Also in the 1969-70 school year, less than 4 percent of all school employees were black, even though the black student population was approximately 14 percent. There are no blacks employed in the central administration of the Waterloo schools.

Teachers

Teachers are a crucial factor in the quality of education provided. The extent and kind of their experience, the excellence of their training, and their attitudes toward students cannot be overestimated.

The only black school social worker in Waterloo said that white teachers and counselors frequently had trouble relating to black students.

> Many teachers have never met or lived around black people so that black students pose to them quite a challenge because they find it difficult to understand some of the things about our life style and some of the ways in which our children communicate and some of their hostilities, and so on. There are all sorts of ways, I guess, in which you could phrase it, but on the whole they have little or no understanding of black people and the black culture and what it means.

This unfamiliarity and lack of understanding bar effective communication between teachers and students. Teachers are unsure and sometimes reject exhibitions of a culture they do not understand; the students are alienated by this rejection.

Often, the social worker explained, white teachers will come to minority schools with the idea of "being good" to the black children. Barriers between teachers and students, however, embitter the teachers and prevent any relevant educational experience.

Studies of the Waterloo schools indicate a reluctance on the part of the system to provide an adequate and equal education for the black students in the community. This failure to confront and correct an obvious problem inevitably adds to the city's racial strife.

In 1968, East High School was closed. A report released in 1969 explained the underlying racial tension:

> The events leading up to this tragedy stems from the fact that the black students at East want a course in black history. They are asking for a relevant education.

Minority students have not generally been encouraged to excel in school or to continue their education beyond high school. They have not received counseling that would guide them into college or other institutions of higher learning. Black students stated: "We graduate and we walk the streets; for some reason, no jobs for us."

CONCLUSION

The situations that exist in Waterloo are symptomatic of racial hostilities and strain that exist in many American communities. There is a desperate need for a change in the employment and educational structures of the city. This change must come, however, from the government and the people of Waterloo.

Those individuals who will respond to requests from behind closed doors need to have the courage to come forward and take the initiative. There is a need for greater commitment to action on the part of the people in Waterloo.

Talk about attitudes usually falls on deaf ears. But if Waterloo is to change people's attitudes, they have to be examined. For example, the employment of a black, or more blacks in itself will not solve the racial problems of Waterloo. A factor is the way the individual is utilized in the city. If the person is to be used in relationship to his abilities in the total process, then the potential for change is increased. Waterloo has to have meaningful participation of the black community in all levels of the decisionmaking process.

Racial isolation not only harms the black community but the total community and all of its institutions. The problems related to this isolation in school or housing reflect many deep and subtle conflicts. These lie in the attitudes which such segregation generates in a community--fear,

frustration, and unsurety as to the future.

Problems of equal education are directly related to open housing. If discrimination in housing can be eliminated it is possible to desegregate the schools without changing existing patterns. If the housing patterns in Waterloo continue, however, there will be no equal education in Waterloo.

The Committee closes this report with a poem -

*Walk Together Children

People need friends
On whom they can depend
Black or white
They're both just right
Learn to respect people from a different place
Don't say "ugh" just because they look
Different in the face.

Nadra Dabbagh, Age 9
"From Children With Love"

*Columbus Intermediate School, Berkeley Unified School District, Superior Press, Oakland, California, 1969-1970.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of this report, the Iowa State Committee recommends to the government and the citizens of Waterloo:

HOUSING

1. That city housing agencies develop a cooperative agreement, specifying respective roles in a coordinated attack on the housing problem. This should begin with a determination of actual housing needs and should include sharing all plans, resources, and information, culminating in coordinated support for individual projects. The directors of the local agencies in question have mutually supplementary resources. One has demonstrated experience with successful referendum issues, the other has entry to and credibility with Waterloo's poverty community. Both of these resources must be harnessed if low-income housing is to become a reality in Waterloo.
2. That requirements for providing replacement housing for persons displaced by public projects must be respected vis à vis income limitations. If this necessitates public housing, leased units should be employed for short runs.
3. That the low-rent housing commission be granted greater autonomy by the city council. Experience elsewhere indicates that only leadership from a commission independent of political pressures is likely to result in a scattered site, racially balanced public housing program.

4. That community organizations throughout Waterloo direct programmatic effort to the question of housing. Many such groups refuse to acknowledge that housing is a subject within their purview and few have any structured programs devoted to that end. In addition, coordination between private organizations has been spotty at best. An ad hoc committee with representation from local poverty agencies, legal aid societies, and citizens' groups should be formed with the specific purpose of reviewing progress since the Housing Seminar of April 1970.
5. That local groups publish, to the broadest extent, information regarding Federal fair housing laws. Complaints should be sent to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. In addition, the local Board of Realtors, together with the chamber of commerce and lending institutions, must undertake programs of fair housing education among the housing sales and finance industries.
6. That the Waterloo Commission on Human Rights be staffed with a full-time attorney who would handle complaints of housing discrimination and other civil rights violations.
7. That the city of Waterloo provide public housing to residents who are living in substandard housing.
8. That the city develop a comprehensive housing program to meet the needs of the residents of Waterloo.
9. That the State law in Iowa referred to as "Iowa Codes" which does not allow for public housing unless passed by referendum be repealed.

10. That the Department of Housing and Urban Development no longer fund any future projects in the State until the housing needs of the poor and low-income individuals are met in Waterloo and other cities in Iowa.

EDUCATION

1. That the Waterloo Board of Education review the following statements for their applicability in the city (Syracuse, New York Board of Education):

   ". . . .there does exist a pattern of racial imbalance in our Syracuse public schools;

   . . . .racial imbalance. . .of any kind is inconsistent with basic principles of education in a free democratic society;

   . . . .the board of education is. . . in a position of responsibility with respect to the racial composition of the Syracuse schools;

   . . . .it is possible to remedy the problem of racial imbalance in Syracuse through a modification of a number of of school boundaries."

2. That the Waterloo Board of Education develop as a first priority a commitment to desegregation. A policy statement should be issued concerning the problems of racial imbalance.

3. That the board remedy the lack of minority teachers in the Waterloo school system. The teachers should be assigned throughout the system, not merely in one or two schools.

4. That blacks and other minorities be hired at the central

administration office both at the professional and clerical levels. Blacks should be involved in the policy-making process.

5. That the board of education develop a formal structure over a specific period of time in conjunction with the Urban Institute and the Waterloo Education Association to improve human relations in Waterloo schools. (The Urban Institute Team and the Waterloo Education Assocation have been committed to improving human relations in the Waterloo schools and maintaining the highest level of dignity for all those concerned with public education.)
6. That the board of education issue a publication setting forth all student rules and regulations. Copies should be given to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other interested citizens. Some areas which should be covered in the publication are: regulations and individual rights; assembly, petition, and expression; right of association; suspension and expulsion; freedom from police oppression; search and seizure; dress and grooming; valid and unbiased testing.
7. That all textbooks and curriculum be reviewed for quality and representativeness.